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ABSTRACT

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Sex-Role Typing and Sex in the Use of and Susceptibility to Influence

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Abstract

A study (N = 60) was conducted to investigate the relationship between sex and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory in various measures of social influence. These influence measures involved self-reports of power strategies, peer evaluations of influence during group discussions, and personality scales measuring social influence or social power concepts. It was found that regardless of the subject's sex, masculine and androgynous persons received more positive peer evaluations than feminine persons. Further, the results indicated that sex-typed people were more likely to report using power strategies consistent with popular sex stereotypes than cross-sex-typed or androgynous people. It was also found that sex-typed and androgynous persons had higher need for approval scores than cross-sex-typed individuals. The results have implications for Bem's conceptualization of sex-role androgyny as well as theories about the acquisition and maintenance of sex-roles.

Sex-Role Typing and Sex in the Use of and Susceptibility to Influence

Television programs, comic strips, and other purveyors of cultural wisdom constantly remind us that men and women "get their way" with remarkably different methods. Men are supposed to use physical force and give commands; while women are supposed to appear appealingly helpless and drop hints. The purpose of this study is to empirically test these popular assumptions about sex differences in the use of influence techniques. Furthermore, this study is designed to test an alternative hypothesis that sex-role typing is as important as sex in accounting for differences in the use of influence techniques.

This study will also investigate sex differences in susceptibility to influence. Studies of sex stereotypes (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972) indicate that men and women are expected to be differentially susceptible to social influence. Men are expected to be independent and individualistic; while women are expected to be gullible and yielding. However, direct investigations of sex-related differences in susceptibility to influence have produced conflicting results (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). In fact, since most of such research finds no sex-related differences, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) concluded that the belief that women are more conforming to social pressure than men is unfounded. However, because many of the traits associated with masculinity are concerned with resistance to influence and many of the traits associated with femininity are concerned with conforming to or harmonizing with

influence, one can reasonably expect sex-role typing to be related to susceptibility to influence. This study aims to test the hypothesis that sex-role typing is not only related to susceptibility to influence, but also that sex-role typing is as important as sex in differentiating people in terms of their susceptibility to influence.

The means of measuring sex-role typing in this study is the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) measure was chosen because it includes, in addition to the traditional categories of masculinity and femininity, a third category called androgyny. Sex-role androgyny represents sex-role neutrality; that is, androgynous persons are neither masculine nor feminine. Instead, their personality contains in about equal proportions both masculine-typed and feminine-typed traits. Bem has hypothesized that being androgynous or sex-role typed is related to one's ability to respond to various situations flexibly. She reasoned that a sex-role typed person can respond effectively only to those situations that are consistent with the appropriate sex-role definition. In contrast, because androgynous persons are free of sex-role constraints, they respond equally adaptively to situations demanding masculine or feminine behavior. Indeed, Bem (1975a, 1975b) found some support for this hypothesis.

Several measures of social influence will be used to study the relationship between sex and the BSRI. The first set of these measures how masculine, feminine, and androgynous males and females influence others. These three measures consist of one open-ended, self-report measure of preferred power strategies (Goodchilds, Quadrado, & Raven, Note 1), one

behavioral measure of social effectiveness in small groups, and the Mach V scale (Christie & Geis, 1970).

With the preferred power strategies measure it is predicted that masculine and feminine males and females will claim to employ power strategies consistent with their respective sex-role definitions. For example, it is predicted that masculine persons and males will be more likely to report using assertion or force to influence others; while feminine persons and females will be more likely to report using subtlety and emotion in influencing others. Androgynous persons are expected to report using power strategies consistent with both masculine and feminine stereotypes.

Likewise, it is predicted that perceived social effectiveness in small groups will be related to sex-role typing. More specifically, it is predicted that masculine and androgynous persons (either males or females) will be seen as more socially effective in group discussions than feminine persons. This prediction is made because the masculine sex-role definition includes dominance, leadership, and assertion; while the feminine sex-role is defined in terms of being passive, shy, and soft-spoken.

Since the Mach V scale measures one's tendency to manipulate others (Christie & Geis, 1970), it is predicted that feminine persons (regardless of sex) will score more highly Machiavellian than either masculine or androgynous persons. This prediction is based on popular stereotypes about femininity (Johnson, Note 2).

The second set of social influence measures are concerned with answering the question how persons of different sex-role types are influenced by

others. The second set of measures consist of three different instruments. First, a standard conformity paradigm, modeled after Bem's (1975a) version, is conducted in an attempt to replicate her results. Second, the Marlowe-Crowne social-desirability scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1955) is included to determine how motivated persons of different sex-roles and sexes are to obtain social approval. Bem (1974, 1975a) included in the BSRI a Social Desirability scale in order to measure the extent to which subjects describe themselves in falsely positive ways. She found zero order correlations between the Social Desirability scale and the Masculinity and Femininity scales of the BSRI. The Marlowe-Crowne social-desirability scale involves a somewhat different conceptualization of the term social desirability. The Marlowe-Crowne measures how much people are motivated to obtain the approval of others, rather than to what extent one has a falsely positive response set to personality inventories. Since conforming to social norms is often motivated by a need for social approval, it is expected that conformity to sex-appropriate sex-roles will be positively related to the Marlowe-Crowne social-desirability scores. That is, it is predicted that masculine males and feminine females will score higher on the Marlowe-Crowne social-desirability scale than masculine females and feminine males.

A third measure of social influence used in this study is a simple measure of person perception accuracy (Falbo, 1973). It is included here in order to determine if sex and sex-role variables are related to the accuracy with which other persons are perceived. This relationship between accuracy and sex and sex-role variables has important implications for

theories of sex-role acquisition. Most, if not all theories regarding sex-role acquisition are based on the notion that children learn about sex-roles by observing the sex-role behavior of the people around them (Kohlberg, 1966; Lynn, 1969; Mischel, 1970). Presumably, the more accurately they perceive others, the better they will learn their "appropriate" sex-roles. Thus, one would expect sex-typed persons (masculine males and feminine females) to have higher accuracy scores than cross-sex typed persons.

Method

Subjects and Experimenters

One hundred fifty Wake Forest University undergraduates (75 male, 75 female) participated in a two hour experiment for course credit. This total sample represents all the females present in the subject pool plus an equivalent number of males. The present data represents a subset of a larger study of social power. All subjects completed the BSRI and their Androgyny Scores (the sex-role score derived from the BSRI) were computed. On the basis of these scores, 60 subjects (30 male, 30 female) were selected as a subsample for data analysis. A similar selection procedure based on the BSRI was employed by Bem (1975a). Two considerations guided their selection. First was the requirement of equal numbers of male and female subjects within each of the three sex-role categories. Second was the necessity of selecting groups with nonoverlapping Androgyny Scores. Given the distribution of the total sample, 10 subjects within each sex by sex-role group was the largest equal number possible without creating groups with overlapping Androgyny Scores. The mean Androgyny Scores of this sample were: Masculine (Males, -4.18; Females, -2.07), Androgynous (Males, -.18; Females, +.14), and Feminine (Males, +1.94; Females, +3.41).

All experimenters were female undergraduates blind to the purposes of the experiment. Because the investigator's feminist attitudes were known to many of the subjects, the experimenters were asked not to reveal the identity of the investigator for fear that this might influence the subject's responses.

Procedure

The experiment was entitled "Social Competence and Social Perception" and briefly presented as a study of human interaction in the context of several tasks. All subjects were run in same-sex groups of five. Upon arrival, each subject was seated at a desk and given the accuracy of person perception task. This task consisted of showing the subjects four slides, all of which contained one person in an articulated environment. Half the slides contained males; half, females. Each slide was shown for 20 seconds and after each slide was shown, the subjects answered six multiple choice questions about what they had seen in the slides. These questions concerned the clothing and facial expressions of the persons portrayed in the slides. Then the subjects were asked to write an essay on the topic "How I get my way." They were given 10 minutes to complete this essay. Then, the subjects were gathered around a table and instructed to spend 20 minutes discussing the topic "What I plan to get out of college." Before the disucssion began, each subject was given a discussant number which ranged from one to five. Discussant numbers were assigned sequentially, in a clockwise fashion, starting from the experimenter's right. So that the subjects could identify fellow discussants easily, the discussant number of each subject was written on a 3" x 5" card and pinned to their clothing before the discussion. To

eliminate any expectation that the experimenter would lead the discussion, the experimenter left the room after the discussant numbers were assigned. After the discussion, the experimenter again went around the circle announcing outloud the discussant number of each subject. Then, each participant was taken to a separate cubicle and asked to rate the other participants (identified by discussant number) along six dimensions. These six dimensions were: (a) How much would you like to participate in another discussion group with this person? (b) How considerate is this person? (c) How do you like this person? (d) How well does this person express him(her) self? (e) How honest do you think this person is? (f) How friendly is this person? The experimenter visited each subject in her/his cubicle and asked if she/he needed help in remembering the discussant numbers of fellow participants. Less than 5% of the subjects requested help in identifying fellow discussants. The subjects remained in these separate cubicles for the rest of the experimental session.

Once the subjects completed the discussant ratings, the experimenter administered the conformity experiment. This was presented to the subjects as a "Humor Study" and consisted of rating cartoons for funniness in a fashion similar to that devised by Bem (1975a). Because of a lack of research facilities and subject hours, an exact replication of Bem's procedure was impossible. In the present study, the experimenters gave each subject a stack of 36 xeroxed New Yorker cartoons and a corresponding stack of rating sheets. False feedback about other subjects' ratings was given on the accompanying rating sheets. Previously, 72 cartoons (from The New Yorker, issues November 6-December 4, 1971, inclusive) had been rated for

funniness by 10 male and 10 female judges. Those 19 cartoons that were rated as funniest and those 19 rated as least funny were selected for use in this experiment.

In the instructions for the "Humor Study," subjects were told that the same 36 rating sheets were being used by several subjects in an effort to cut down on paper consumption. These "other" subjects were presented as having participated in previous sessions of the same experiment. Subjects believed this.[1] During the critical (false feedback) trials, the subjects thought they were the fourth (and last) person to rate the cartoon. In half of these ten critical trials, the bogus ratings of the three other subjects were all negative when actually the cartoons had been previously rated as funny. In the other five critical trials, the bogus ratings were all positive when in fact the cartoons had been previously rated as unfunny. In order to make these ten critical trials credible, there were 18 cartoons which received varying quantities (from zero to two other raters) of actual ratings based on the pretest judges' ratings. In addition, there were eight cartoons about which false feedback was given from one or two other (but not three other) subjects. The proportions and types of critical and credibility-enhancing trials used here are similar to the proportions and types used by Bem (1975a). The critical and noncritical trials were presented in a random order.

When the subjects finished the cartoon ratings, they were given a series of paper and pencil personality measures. These were stapled together and accompanied by their appropriate instructions and answer sheets. These personality measures were administered in the following order:

(a) Marlowe-Crowne social-desirability scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1955); (b) the Mach V scale (Christie & Geis, 1970); (c) Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). The BSRI was always administered last because it was expected that the "Describe Yourself" experience entailed in the BSRI would be more likely to influence the other measures than would these other measures effect the BSRI.

Data Analysis

Analyses of variance were conducted with sex and sex-role (as measured by the BSRI) as independent variables and with group discussion ratings, the numbers of errors in slide perception, and personality scale scores as dependent measures. Conformity was measured in terms of the number of critical trials the subjects conformed to the bogus ratings of others. Specifically, a trial was scored as conforming if the subject rated an unfunny cartoon anywhere from the central rating to the funny end or if the subject rated a funny cartoon anywhere from the central rating to the unfunny end of the rating scale. Ratings on the central point were classified as neither conforming nor nonconforming. The number of trials a subject conformed was used as the dependent variable.

The paragraphs entitled "How I get my way" were coded in terms of the absence or presence of any of the following strategies: (a) Assertion, (b) Tears, (c) Ingratiation, (d) Subtlety, and (e) Reasoning. These strategies were selected for analysis because they represent popular stereotypes about different power strategies used by women and men.[2] Assertion was scored if the subject made statements such as "I voice my wishes loudly," or "I become blunt and outspoken." Subtlety was scored if the subject made

such claims as "Nobody likes a pushy person," or "I drop hints." Tears was scored if the subject stated that crying or threatened crying was one of the ways he got his way. Ingratiation was coded when the subjects made statements such as "I try to look sympathetic," or "I put on a sweet face." Reasoning was scored if the subject claimed such strategies as, "I use logic," or "I tell them why my plan is better, emphasizing the strong points and ignoring the weak ones." Eighty percent of the subjects cited more than one strategy in "getting their way." Many of these other strategies are not reported here, because they are not conceptually relevant to sex or sex-role differences. This method of obtaining self-reports of preferred power strategies was devised by Goodchilds, Quadrado, and Raven (Note 1).

The "How I get my Way" paragraphs were coded by two undergraduate females who were blind to the sex and sex-role classification of the subjects. Using the reliability formula provided by Winter (1973), the amount of agreement between the two coders was found to be: (a) Assertion, .82; (b) Tears, 1.00; (c) Ingratiation, .87; (d) Subtlety, .84; (e) Reasoning, .82.

Results

The results section will be divided into two parts. The first part concerns the ways males and females of different sex-role types influence others. The second part focuses on the ways persons of different sex-role types are influenced by others.

How They Influence Others

The "How I get my Way" paragraphs yielded many significant results. Feminine persons, regardless of sex, were significantly more likely to use

Ingratiation, F (2,54) = 4.36, $p < .05$, Tears, F (2,54) = 4.76, $p < .05$, and Subtlety, F (2,54) = 4.70, $p < .05$, in getting their own way than masculine or androgynous persons. In contrast, there was a borderline significant finding that masculine persons were more likely to employ Assertion in "getting their way" than either androgynous or feminine persons, F (2,54) = 2.91, $p < .05$, $p < .10$. In terms of Reasoning, significant sex, F (2,54) = 3.76, $p < .05$, and borderline sex-role, F (2,54) = 2.31, $p < .05$, $p < .10$, differences were found. Contrary to popular stereotypes, females and feminine persons claimed to use reasoning more often in "getting their way" than males and masculine or androgynous persons.

A word count was made on the "How I get my Way" paragraphs and neither sex, F (1,54) = 1.03, n.s., nor sex-role, F (2,54) = 1.32, n.s., accounted for a significant amount of variance.

The discussion ratings overall indicated that masculine and androgynous persons are rated more positively than feminine persons (regardless of sex). Sex-role and not sex produced significant main effects in four out of the six discussion ratings. The results are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Analysis of the Mach V data failed to support the hypothesis that feminine persons score significantly more Machiavellian than either androgynous or masculine persons, F (2,54) = 2.30, n.s.

How Others Influence Them

A significant sex by sex-role interaction, F (2,54) = 3.48, $p < .05$, was produced in the Marlowe-Crowne social-desirability scale data. The means, presented in Table 2, indicate that masculine and androgynous males

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Insert Table 2 about here

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and feminine and androgynous females scored higher on social-desirability than feminine males or masculine females.

The results of the conformity (cartoon ratings) study failed to replicate Bem's (1975a) findings. That is, no significant main effects for sex or sex-role were found.

In terms of the accuracy of person perception, sex-role, F (2,54) = 2.26, n.s., did not account for a significant amount of variance. However, it was found that females made significantly more errors than males, F (1,54) = 3.86, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The results of this study provide considerable information about how influence is wielded and perceived by members of different sex-role and sex categories. Most of the significant findings deal with how persons classified as masculine, feminine, or androgynous claim to influence others as well as how these persons are evaluated by others. The essays written about "How I get my Way" revealed that feminine persons reported using emotionally-based (Tears, Ingratiation) and indirect (Subtlety) means of influence significantly more often than masculine or androgynous persons. In contrast, masculine persons claimed to use Assertion more often in "getting their way" than feminine or androgynous persons. Furthermore, there

were significant sex-role main effects in four out of the six discussion group ratings. Three of these four effects were due to the low ratings received by feminine persons. These feminine subjects were rated as least liked and least honest, and their fellow discussants were least interested in participating in another discussion group with them. This feminine "behavioral deficit" has been reported elsewhere (Bem, 1975; Putnam & Hansen, 1972). The group discussion results also indicated that masculine persons were rated highest in their ability to express themselves.

It is important to note that these findings are true regardless of the sex of the masculine, feminine, or androgynous person. There were no main effects for the variable of sex nor did sex interact with the sex-role variable in the group discussion ratings or the self-reported power strategies (except for the Reasoning category, which will be discussed later). This lack of sex differences is probably due to the composition of this sample. That is, because equal numbers of each sex were placed in each sex-role group, this may have prevented sex differences from emerging. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that to the extent that feminine traits are more commonly found among females, and to the extent that masculine traits are more commonly found among males, then one would find sex differences in the use of power strategies and the evaluations of peers in the general population.

And what about those androgynous people? Do they, as Bem (1975a) suggests, show cross-situational adaptability? Overall, the results of this study support such a conceptualization of the androgynous person. In all of the dependent measures considered in this study, the scores of the androgynous people were undifferentiated from at least one of the other sex-role groups. That is, androgynous people failed to distinguish themselves behaviorally from the other two sex-role groups. Unfortunately, while this finding supports the behavioral flexibility notion of the concept of androgyny, it also poses a problem. That is, this result could also be interpreted to mean that androgynous persons are noteworthy only in their tendency to score somewhere in the middle to positive range of any dimension of measured behavior. Thus, it may be that those people classified as androgynous might be more aptly described as persistent middle-to-positive scorers. Further research investigating this measurement artifact interpretation is needed.

This study succeeded in demonstrating that the sex appropriateness of sex-role classifications differentiated people in terms of their need for social approval. Androgynous and sex-typed persons (masculine males, feminine females) were found to have higher needs for social approval than people who are cross-sex-typed (masculine females, feminine males). This finding has implications for theories about the acquisition and maintenance of sex-roles. That is, it may be that cross-sex-role people acquire and/or

maintain their counternorm role identification because they are relatively unconcerned about social approval. Also, it is possible that androgynous persons are androgynous and not cross-sex-typed because of their concern for social approval. Thus, for example, if a female with some masculine traits is concerned about the approval of others, she will cultivate at least enough feminine traits to ensure some social acceptability. Likewise, if a male with some feminine traits is motivated to obtain approval from others, he will cultivate enough masculine traits to satisfy at least some of his society's expectations about males. In either case, both persons would score androgynous because of their balanced affirmation of both feminine and masculine traits. These explanations for the observed differences in social approval are based on the expectation that deviance from cultural norms (such as sex-roles) results in a loss of social approval. It is suggested here that cross-sex-typed persons are willing to take this loss; while, androgynous persons are not.

The failure to find sex-role differences in the person perception accuracy measure indicates that people of different sex-role types are equally capable of accurate person perception. This finding disputes the idea that cross-sex-typed individuals acquired their counternorm sex-role identification because they misperceive others. Furthermore, this finding suggests that other factors, such as social approval, probably have a greater influence in determining sex-role identification than accuracy of person perception.

Unfortunately, this study failed to replicate Bem's (1975a) finding that masculine and androgynous persons conform less than feminine persons

in a standard conformity situation. No differences in conforming were found between the masculine, androgynous, or feminine persons of this study. This failure to find differences in conformity among sex-role groups is puzzling when one considers that this study included over three times the number of subjects used by Bem. Presumably, the strength of her finding would be increased by a larger sample size. It is possible that the differences in procedure--most notably, the fact that in Bem's study, conformity was more of a public event--probably accounts for the discrepant results.

The results of this study included two findings which contradict popular stereotypes about women. The first such finding is that females reported using Reasoning in "getting their way" more often than males. The second counter-stereotype finding is that the females of this study were less accurate than males in person perception. This latter finding contradicts not only popular stereotypes about women, but also some past research (Kaess & Witryol, 1971; Rosenthal, Archer, DiMatteo, Koivumaki, & Rogers, 1974). Nonetheless, female superiority in accuracy of person perception has not been a universal finding (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Taft, 1955). These two findings taken together, suggest that either the present sample is somewhat unrepresentative, or that young women in fact use reason more and are less interpersonally sensitive than popular stereotypes would indicate.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that both sex-role typing and sex are related to the choice of influence techniques, peer evaluations of social effectiveness, and one's need for social approval.

Furthermore, a broad interpretation of the results suggests that femininity may be a liability to someone who is trying to influence others. For both males and females, this study found that masculinity and androgyny is associated with more positive forms of influence as well as more positive evaluations from others than is femininity. In addition, the results suggest that the need for social approval may be an important determinant in the acquisition and development of sex-roles.

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Footnotes

[1]All subjects were interviewed and debriefed after the experiment. As each subject finished his personality inventories, the experimenter asked her/him to guess what the purpose of the two hour study was. None guessed correctly. All subjects claimed to believe that other subjects had used the same rating sheets during the cartoon study.

[2]A complete coding manual, including copies of the testing instrument, is available from the author.

W.F.U.

Table 1

Mean Discussion Ratings as a Function of Sex-Role

Discussion Rating Question	Sex-Role			Sex-Role Main Effect
	Masculine	Androgynous	Feminine	
1. How much would you like to participate in another discussion group with this person?	12.60	11.92	10.22[a]	7.63**
2. How considerate is this person?	12.03	12.51	12.23	1.59 (n.s.)
3. How much do you like this person?	11.65	11.66	10.69[a]	5.56*
4. How well does this person express him(her) self?	12.39	11.09[b]	9.71[c]	5.02*
5. How honest do you think this person is?	13.32	12.86	12.00[c]	3.67*
6. How friendly is this person?	12.86	12.34	11.67	1.96 (n.s.)

Note. The scores ranged from 1-21; the higher the score, the higher the rating.

[a]The difference between the androgynous and feminine means is significant at $p < .01$

[b]The difference between the masculine and androgynous means is significant at $p < .0$

[c]The difference between the androgynous and feminine means is significant at $p < .05$

*$p < .05$, df = 2/54

**$p < .01$

Table 2

Mean Marlowe-Crowne Social-Desirability Scale as a Function of Sex and Sex-Role[a]

Sex-Role	Sex	
	Males	Females
Masculine	14.60	12.20
Androgynous	13.80	15.00
Feminine	10.20	15.50

[a]Higher scores represent a greater concern for receiving social approval.